

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4585
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 NDJAMENA 2372

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS
SUBJECT: POLITICAL SITUATION IN CHAD.

1. SUMMARY: IN THE LATE SPRING OF 1977, THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT OF CHAD APPEARED TO BE BEGINNING TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES OF SOME MORE PERMANENT ARM OF GOVERNMENT TO REPLACE THE PROVISIONAL STRUCTURE CREATED AFTER THE MILITARY TAKEOVER OF APRIL 13, 1975. THE MID-MAY SEMINAR OF NATIONAL LEADERS EVIDENTLY WAS INTENDED TO DEVELOP A CONSENSUS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL REGARDINGTHE FUTURE POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONS OF CHAD. FEELINGS AND OPINIONS AT THE SEMINAR, HOWEVER, SEEM TO HAVE BEEN STRONGER THEN ANTICIPATED BY ITS ORGANIZERS. WHILE DISCUSSION WAS FRANK, CONCRETE RESULTS WERE FEW. WHATEVER THE RESULTS OF THE SEMINAR, THEY WERE OVERSHADOWED BY THE NORTHERN REBEL OFFENSIVE BEGINNING IN LATE JUNE. THIS OFFENSIVE

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BROUGHT TOGETHER THE DIVERGENT FACTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT AT LEAST TEMPORARILY, BUT OVER THE LONGER RUN MAY WELL SERVE TO INCREASE THE LCIVISIVENESS AMONG THE RULING ELEMENTS. WHILE CURRENT POLITICAL TRENDFARE NOT YET CLEAR, AUGMENTED BICKERING WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT AND INCREASED DISAFFECTION AMONG THE NORTHERN MUSLIM POPULATION

SEEM PROBABLE. WE DO NOT EXPECT THE MAJOR AMERICAN ECONOMIC INTEREST IN CHAD. PETROLEUM EXPLORATION AND EXPLOITATION TO BE AFFECTED BY POLITICAL EVENTS IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. THE CURRENT, GENERALLY FAVORABLE, TREND OF CHADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS MAY DETERIORATE. THE PHYSICAL SECURITY OF AMERICAN CITIZENS IN CHAD REMAINS THE EMBASSY'S MOST IMMEDIATE CONCERN.

2. IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE JUNE REBEL OFFENSIVE.

A. THE TWO YEAR OLD MILITARY REGIME IN CHAD IS UNUSUAL IN AFRICA IN THAT IT HAS NOT PROPOUNDED ANY POLITICAL THEORY, IT HAS NOT CREATED THE SINGLE GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED POLITICAL PARTY COMMON IN MANY PARTS OF THE CONTINENT, NOR HAS IT ESPoused ANY ETHNIC OR RELIGIOUS DOGMA TO REPLACE THE QUOTE AFRICAN AUTHENTICITY UNQUOTE DOGMA OF THE LATE PRESIDENT TOMBALBAYE WHICH HAD BEEN PATTERNED AFTER THAT OF ZAIRE'S PRESIDENT MOBUTU. THE MILITARY REGIME HAS INSTEAD FOLLOWED AN UNSPOKEN PRAGMATISM THAT HAS RECOGNIZED CHAD'S CONTINUED FINANCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND MILITARY DEPENDENCE ON FRANCE WHILE AT THE SAME TIME IT HAS WELCOMED ASSISTANCE IN ANY AND ALL OF THESE AREAS FROM ALL POSSIBLE SOURCES IRRESPECTIVE OF IDEOLOGY OR POLITICAL ALIGNMENT.

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B. IN MID-MAY THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT ORGANIZED A FOUR DAY SEMINAR FOR FOUR HUNDRED OF THE MILITARY, GOVERNMENT, AND PRIVATE SECTOR LEADERS OF THE COUNTRY FOR THE PURPOSES OF CONVEYING TO THEM THE REGIME'S OUTSTANDING PRIORITIES AND, APPARENTLY, TO EXCHANGE FRANK VIEWS ON THE FUTURE POLICIES AND POLICIES OF CHAD. PRESIDENT MALLOUM, WHO ATTENDED MOST SESSIONS, STRESSED THE NEED FOR QUOTE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION UNQUOTE OF THE WHOLE OF CHAD (I.E., RESOLUTION OF THE TWELVE YEAR OLD REBELLION), THE HIGHEST IMPORTANCE OF THE HUMAN FACTOR IN THIS ESSENTIALLY AGRICULTURAL COUNTRY, AND THE SELF-DISCIPLINE AND DILIGENT OF THE GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONAIRES REQUIRED IF PROGRESS WAS TO BE MADE. MANY OBSERVERS ANTICIPATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION WOULD FOLLOW THE MAY SEMINAR AND, INDEED, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THIS WAS PLANNED ONLY TO BE DISRUPTED BY THE REBEL OFFENSIVE IN THE NORTH. SOME WELL-INFORMED OBSERVERS BELIEVED THAT PRESIDENT MALLOUM HAD INTENDED TO CREATE A PRIME MINISTER WHO WOULD HEAD A CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT IN TURN RESPONSIBLE TO THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL

WITH HIMSELF REMAINING AS CHIEF OF STATE WITH THE TITLE OF PRESIDENT. THESE SAME OBSERVERS BELIEVED THAT THE OPPOSITION OF THE SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS WHO NOW HEAD MOST OF THE MINISTRIES OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT WAS SUFFICIENTLY STRONG TO BLOCK THIS PROGRAM, WITH A FEW ADDING THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS THREATENED WITH DEPOSITION SHOULD HE ATTEMPT TO FOLLOW THROUGH. OTHERS ATTRIBUTE THE PROPOSAL FOR A CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT TO THE CIVILIANS AND TECHNOCRATS. BUT OVERSHADOWING EVEN THESE IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS WAS THE QUESTION OF QUOTE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION UNQUOTE AND, MORE PRECISELY, THE ROLE THAT THE NORCHERN, MOYULEM HALF AND CENTER OF THE COUNTRY AND ITS 40 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL POPULATION SHOULD

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PLAY IN A TRULY NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 NDJAMENA 2372

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

IN 1971, THE POPULATION BASED UPON 1964 CENSUS FIGURES

IN THE BORKU-ENNEDI-TIBESTI (B.E.T.) PREFECTURES
PLUS THE NORTHERN PARTS OF KANEM, BATHA, AND BILTINE
PREFECTURES WAS ESTIMATED AT LESS THAN 100,000
PERSONS. THE POPULATION OF THE CENTRAL, SAHELIAN
ZONE OF CHAD WAS ESTIMATED AT 1.37 MILLION OF A TOTAL
OF 3.7 MILLION PERSONS. WHILE THE OVERALL POPULATION
OF CHAD MAY HAVE BEEN 3.7 MILLION IN 1971, IT
IS LIKELY, BECAUSE OF THE 1972-75 DAHELAIN DROUGHT,
THAT THE POPULATION IN THE CENTRAL ZONE OF THE COUNTRY
HAS BEEN REDUCED.

C. THE FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MAY
SEMINAR AS PUBLISHED IN ESSENCE LARGEMLY RESTATED
THE PROBLEMS WITHOUT PROPOSING SOLUTIONS. THESE
RECOMMENDATIONS, INTER ALIA, INVITED THE SMC TO CONTINUE
ITS RECONCILIATION EFFORTS, RECOMMEND THAT THE
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ROLE OF THE SMC BE BETTER DEFINED AND SUGGESTED
THAT THE SMC IS PRINCIPALLY AN ARBITER CALLED
FOR SEVERAL IMPROVEMENTS IN DEVELOPMENT PLANNING
AND IMPLEMENTATION (E.G., VILLAGE COOPERATIVES),
PROPOSED ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND REORGANIZATIONS
WITHOUT SPECIFYING DETAILS, AND, PROBABLY MOST
IMPORTANTLY, CALLED FOR THE CREATION AS SOON AS
POSSIBLE OF A COMMISSION TO STUDY THE FUTURE INSTI-
TUTIONS OF THE REPUBLIC. IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, THE
OFT-STATED POLICIES OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT
WERE REITERATED, I.E., NON-ALIGNMENT, A POLICY OF
GOOD-NEIGHBORLINESS, FRIENDSHIP AND FRATERNITY,
AND THE ADHERENCE OF CHAD TO THE CHARTERS OF THE
UN AND OAU.

3. THE SITUATION IN LIGHT OF THE REBEL OFFENSIVE:

A. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, WHILE THERE IS
LITTLE IMMEDIATE DANGER OF THE REBELS IN NORTHERN
CHAD QUOTE MARCHING ON NDJAMENA UNQUOTE (SOME 600
MILES OF DESERT SEPARATE THEM FROM US), THE MILITARY
SETBACKS OF THE GOVERNMENT MAY WELL HAVE SOME
POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS. THESE COULD TAKE TWO
FORMS: DIVISIONS BETWEEN PRESENT LEADERS; AND
INCREASED MOSLEM DISCONTENT WITHIN THE ARMY AND
WITHIN THE GENERAL POPULACE.

B. EVEN BEFORE THE PRESENT FIGHTING IN THE
NORTH, CRACKS WERE APPARENT IN THE SOLIDARITY OF
THE SMC. SEVERAL IMPORTANT MEMBERS INCLUDING
FOREIGN MINISTER KAMOUGUE (PROBABLY THE MOST ABLE
AND AMBITIOUS) WERE OBVIOUSLY DISENCHANTED WITH

PRESIDENT MALLOUM'S PERFORMANCE. WE BELIEVE THAT
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THE LDCREASED FIGHTING HBA BROUGHT ABOUT A TEMPORARY SOLIDARITY AND THAT THESE DIVISONS HAVE BEEN TEMMBRARILY PAPERED OVER. WE WSO BELIEVEJJ HOWEVER, THAT THE VARIOUS FACTIONS WITHIN MEE SMC ARE AT SOME POINT GOING TO START BLAMING EACH OTHER FOR THE LOSS OF THE NORTHWEST. SUCH DIVISIVENESS COULD CAUSE A RESHIFTING (OR PERHAPS SEVERAL RESHIFTINGS) OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE SMC.

C.THE THREAT OF INCREASED MOSLEM/NORTHERN DISAFFECTION IS, POTENTIALLY, OF GREATER DANGER. IT COULB TAKE SEVERAL FORM. IT SHOULD BE BORNE IN MIND THAT CHAD IS A SORT OF A SUDAN IN REVERSE, WITH A CLEAR CUT DIVISION OF THE POPULATION BETWEEN MOSLEM NORTHERNERS AND ANIMIST/CHRISTIAN SOUTHERNERS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN IN THE HANDS OF THE SOUTHERNERS (A MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION) SINCE INDEPENDENCE, AND NORTHERNERS HAVE NEVER WILLINGLY ACCEPTED THIS ARRANGEMENT. THIS DIVISION, OF COURSE, IS THE REASON WHY THE SMC HAS MADE QUOTE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION UNQUOTE ITS MOST IMPORTANT OBJECTIE.THIS POLICY HAS OBVIOUSLY FAILED TO DATE.

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CORRECTED COPY (TEXT PARA 3.)

D. A SIZEABLE PROPORTION OF THE MILITARY FORCES,
NOTABLY IN THE GARDE NOMADE, IS OF MUSLVO STOCK,
ALTHOUGH SOUTHERNERS PREDOMINATE IN THE ARMY.
WITH THE EXCEPTION OF AIR FORCE CAPT. ZAKARIA, A
MEMBER OF THE SMC AND MINISTER OF CIVIL WORKS, MINES
AND GEOLOGY, WHO IS GENERALLY CONCERNED TO BE A
QUOTE TOKEN ARAB UNQUOTE WHOSE PRINCIPAL
LOYALTIES LIE WITH PRSIDENT MALLOUM, NO SENIOR
OFFICER OF THE SMC OR OF THE ARMY IS OF NORTHERN
MUSLIM STOCK. THUS THENORTHERNERS WHO ATTEMPTED
TE APRIL 1, 1977, ABORTIVE COUP D'ETAT WERE LED BY
A SECOND LIEUTENANT AND A WARRANT OFFICER.
NONETHELESS, IN THE PRESENTLY WEAKENED CONDITION
OF THE MILITARY, SHOULD THIS NORTHERN MOSLEM
PORTION OF THE MILITARY BECOME RESTLESS, OR SHOULD
THE GOVERNMENT BECOME WORRIEDTHAT IT MIGHT BECOME
RESTLESS, INTERNECINE INTERNAL FIGHTING COULD
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BREAK OUT. SUCH FIGHTING WOULDNOT ONLY WEAKEN
FURTHER THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO RESIST THE
REBELS, BUT WOULD AGGRAVATE DIVISIONS BETWEEN THE
POPULACE IN GENERAL.

E. NDJAMENA IS THE NERVE CENTER OF THE CENTRAL
GOVERNMENT, SUCH AS IT IS. WHILE NORTHERNERS AND
MOSLEMSARE IN A MINORITY IN THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE,
THEY ARE PROBABLY IN A MAJORITY IN NDJAMENA ITSELF
(INCLUDING SUBSTANTIAL NIGERIAN AND SUDANESE POPU-
LATIONS) AND ARE THEREFORE IN A POSITION IN WHICH
DISSATISFACTION CAN BE BROUGHT TO BEAR DIRECTLY
ON THE GOVERNMENT. THESE MOSLEM NORTHERNERS,
CHADIAN AND NON-CHADIAN, FORM A SIGNIFICANT POGTION
OF THE IMPORTANT MERCHANT CLASS IN NDJAMENA AND
HAVE INTHE PAST TWO YEARS OFTEN BEENIN DISAGREEMENT
WITH THE ECONOMIC POLICIES OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT
WHICH THEY HAVE STUND OVERLY RESTRICTIVE, ALTHOUGH
THIS DISSAFTISFACTION TO DATE HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY
CONTAINED. BUT WITH THE SUCCESS OF THE REBELS IN
THE NORTH,REBEL BANDS ELSEWHERE CAN BE EXPECTED
TO BECOME MORE ACTIVE. TERRORISM IN NDJAMENA COULD
BECOME AN IMMINENT THREAT, AND THE NORTHERN
POPULATION COULD BECOME INVOLVED AT LEAST TO THE

EXTENT OF HARBORING SUCH QUOTE BROTHERS. UNQUOTE
THE POLITICAL COMPLEXION OF THE NORTHWESTERN
REBEL FORCES LED BY GOUKOUNI, A TRADITIONAL TOUBOU
REBEL CHES, COULD WELL BE A FACTOR. WHILE MANY
NDJAMENA MOSELM NORTHERNERS, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE
CONSERVATIVE BOTH RELIGIOUSLY AND SOCIALLY AND
THEREFORE MIGHT BE RELUCTANT TO SUPPORT A RADICAL
MOVEMENT IDENTIFIED WITH SOCIALISM OR COMMUNISM,
THEY MIGHT EASILY SUPPORT A CONSERVATIVE LEADER
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WHO HAS AS HIS OBJECTIVE RENEWED NORTHERN/MOSLEM
DOMINATE OVER THE WHOLE OF CHAD, AS WAS THE
TRADITION FOR CENTURIES BEFORE INDEPENDENCE.
AGAIN, A GOVERNMENT REACTION TO SUCH A THREAT OR
THE FEAR OF SUCH A THREAT WOULD EXACERBATE THE
SITUATION.

4. COMMENT: NONE OF THESE TRENDS ARE CLEARLY
VISIBLE YET, BUT UNLESS THE SITUATION IN THE NORTH
IS DRAMATICALLY REVERSED OR AT LEAST STABILIZED,
THE ABOVE FACTORS CAN BE EXPECTED TO COME INTO
PLAY AND THE SITUATION OF THE GOVERNMENT CAN BE
EXPECTED TO DETERIORATE. WE DOUBT IF US INVESTMENTS
AND INTEREST IN PETROLEUM EXPLOITATION WILL BE
SERIOUSLY AFFECTED BY SUCH EVENTS, ALTHOUGH THE
PRESSURE FOR MORE IMMEDIATE RESULTS WILL INCREASE.
OUCNKHIMARY CONCERNS WOULD BE THE SAFETY OF US
CITIZENS AND THE LIKELY DETERIORATION OF THE REASONABLY
GOOD CURRENT SITUATION IN REGARD TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS
OF CHADIAN DWYER

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